
Rolling with Resistance

What does resistance look like?

Behaviors	Message
• Not coming to session • Not responding to communications • Combative language/aggression • Constantly negotiating boundaries • Silence/not sharing	• I'm not committed to this • I don't believe in myself • It's too painful to go there • I want independence/I don't want independence • I'm sick of being controlled • I'm anxious/depressed/hopeless

*Consider resistance as a protective mechanism, rather than something your child is doing TO you. We tend to react poorly to resistance because we believe it is our job to fix it, or we feel personally slighted by it.

What does resistance bring up in us?

Oftentimes resistance is looked at as something negative that needs to be eliminated. But reacting to or pushing against resistance doesn't address its root cause or lead to an ability for your child to gain insight into his or her resistant behavior.

Resistance tends to bring up:

- A desire to punish/lash out
- Wanting to give up
- Frustrations about wasted money
- Feeling personally attacked/slighted/manipulated

To make progress with our children/clients, we must **resist** the urge to react/retreat to our old dynamics. Instead, we can utilize our treatment teams and implement new strategies ("opposite action," non-reactive boundary setting, mindfulness, empathy, etc.)

How Treatment Really Looks

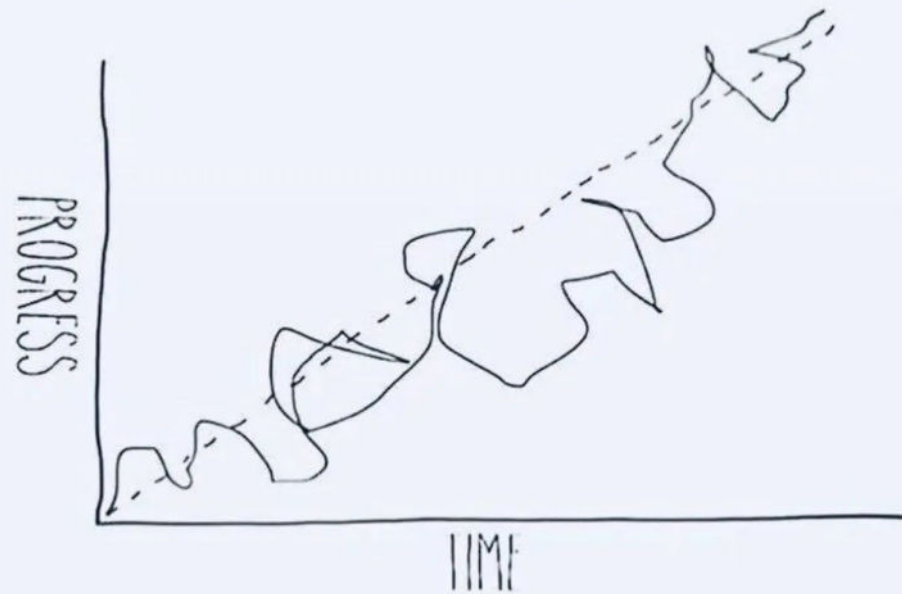
The behaviors we see in therapy are congruent with experiences an individual has in other areas of their life. Such is true with resistance.

As treatment providers we are co-creating change with a client which includes **meeting the client where they are** - sometimes this means simply being with them in their resistance. The harder we push, the more we are saying this is at *my* pace, not yours, which is generally ineffective.

It's important to remember that change is difficult work and requires a significant level of vulnerability. Sometimes simply showing up is a huge step.

Resistance can often be an important part of the therapeutic process - it doesn't mean that progress isn't being made.

HEALING



--- EXPECTATIONS
— REALITY

Going with the Resistance

Young adults (or let's just say adults at this point because this is true for all of us!) - often know when their behaviors are not helping them reach their goals.

Blaming/shaming resistance and/or behaviors that are unhelpful will backfire and impact rapport.

Giving more attention to when they are showing *less* resistance - positive reinforcement.

Therapeutic Interventions

- **Paradoxical Intervention** - there is evidence to suggest that highly resistant clients respond to support of resistance vs. fighting it.
- **Confronting the resistance** instead of fighting it opens up to discussion and therapeutic process about what is beneath the resistance.
- **Collaborative goal setting**
- **Rapport building** - the most important element of any therapy is the relationship between client/therapist. When rapport is strong, resistance tends to become less of an issue. This is often why we see attendance and engagement improve the longer a client is in treatment.
- **Raising Awareness; building “buy in”**

Translating to Parenthood

The quality of your relationship with your adult child matters also! (what we call rapport building in the biz!)

The same behaviors that negatively impact rapport building in therapy can also translate to parent/child relationships.

- Focus on what's working
- Be curious about resistance
- Remove your own attachment to treatment results (easier said than done)
- Reinforce the positive, give less attention to resistance
- Unconditional positive regard
- Remember: your adult child is doing the best that they can

Discussion Questions

When your adult child is resistant to treatment, what comes up for you and how do you usually react?

Thinking through past examples, can you identify strategies that have worked better than others in responding to resistance? What does your child respond best to? What strategies do they reject?

What helps you when you're feeling resistant to something someone wants you to do?